

Illinois Ornithological Society

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Letter from the editor

Native Americans in Illinois once watched and imitated in ritualistic dance the annual courtship of the Greater Prairie-Chicken. Males of this state-endangered avian species fan their tails, strut their feet, and inflate their colored sacs to attract females in a well-choreographed display.

Today, most of us will never have the chance to see the Greater-Prairie Chicken in Illinois. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that in 1915 the birds actually nested in Mundelein, the town where I live. Now, there is no hope that the prairie-chicken could ever return to northern Illinois.

The only hope remains in a small area in southern Illinois where scientists are struggling to maintain a viable population. In this issue, the last of three devoted to our state-endangered birds, associate editor Judy K. DeNeal writes about the history of the Greater Prairie-Chicken in Illinois.

Scientists are unsure whether it is too late for this species to survive here. What is certain is that if we are not careful, other avian species will soon follow the path of the Greater Prairie-Chicken.

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